No. 2

MUSEUM NOTES

Information Sheets from the Newfoundland Museum

The History Of The Newfoundland Museum

Early 19th century travellers to Newfoundland were often dismayed by their first glimpse of the harbour and town of St. John's. In 1810, Sir Robert Steele pronounced that "from the narrowness of the streets and the annoyance of rats", the town was barely habitable. Although the island had, for over 300 years, been one of Britain's most important possessions, little energy had been expended on the actual colonization and social development of the island. Newfoundland was seen, not as a new colony to settle, but as a 'fishing station' and training ground for the British Navy. Permanent settlement was therefore discouraged; those few hardy folk who attempted to make their home in Newfoundland often found their very houses destroyed by agents of the merchants who felt colonists would harm their lucrative trade.

But the Irish and West Country fishermen who chose to remain on the island after the fishing fleets had left for the winter, were a tenacious and enterprising group. By the beginning of the 19th century Newfoundland had a population of 22,000 scattered in tiny outport settlements, but concentrated primarily in the growing town of St. John's. It was these people, led by a few determined individuals, who succeeded in wresting from Britain legal sanctions for their colony and a measure of local government. Sir William Carson wrote in 1813:

> "The only remedy will be found in giving to the people....what is unquestionably their right, a civil government consisting of a resident Governor, a Senate House and a House of Assembly."

His suggested reforms did not come all at once but in that same year arable land was offered for the first time for public lease — Newfoundlanders at last had the legal right to grow a potato!

A print of the town of St. John's, 1786, as depicted in the Log Book of the Pegasus, from the collection of the Public Archives of Canada.

By 1816, a resident military government was established, and by 1829, substantial progress towards an unbiased judicial system and a representative government (finally granted in 1832) was well underway. The names of those responsible for the political developments of the first decades of the 19th century would also appear in the membership lists of the societies and trade clubs whose ultimate aims were the fostering of social and cultural developments to match their hard-earned political reforms. Having ensured that the colony could assume a separate political and social identity, many of these people set out to ensure that these gains would have fertile ground on which to flourish.

With the influx of immigrants to Newfoundland between 1805 and 1835 and the prosperity of the fish trade, St. John's grew rapidly from a large outport to a thriving colonial town. A wealthy resident population of merchants, government officials and military personnel most often just out from Dublin or London, began to demand the civilized comforts to which they had been accustomed at home. These included not only better food and housing but also the availability of newspapers, concerts, lectures and a host of other cultural activities to fill their leisure hours. In this atmosphere the first museum began to grow in Newfoundland.

As early as 1817 a "Cabinet of Curiosities" and Reading Room had been established at the Free Masons Tavern in Solomon's Lane. Mr. Simon Solomon, watchmaker, postmaster and retailer of some note, maintained premises in the Merchants' Block, hoping to receive the patronage of St. John's upper class by providing a more refined environment in which to discuss the political and economic questions of the day. The Tavern not only became a favourite rendezvous for prominent merchants but also provided a locale for displays of the exotic curios their ships brought home from foreign lands. Fire would eventually destroy this embryo museum, but not the spirit that impelled its birth. Within the next few years a number of literary and scientific societies would develop, very likely as a result of discussions held in the informal atmosphere of Mr. Solomon's Tavern.

Notices

Popular Lectures

St. John's Young Men's Literary and Scientific Institute

The third annual Lecture in connection with this Institute will be delivered in the TEMPERANCE HALL as follows:—

Monday,	**Jan.**	**2**	**Hon. R. J. PINSENT — Subject Westminister Abbey**
"	**"**	**28**	**Rev. C. Pedley — The Year 1860**
"	**Feb.**	**2**	**D.W. PROWSE — Light Literature**
"	**"**	**"**	**Hon. Judge ROBINSON — The uses and attractions of Biography**
"	**"**	**8**	**Mr. W. STACY — Music**
"	**"**	**25**	**Rev. D. McCRAE —**
"	**Mar.**	**4**	**Rev. M. HARVEY —**

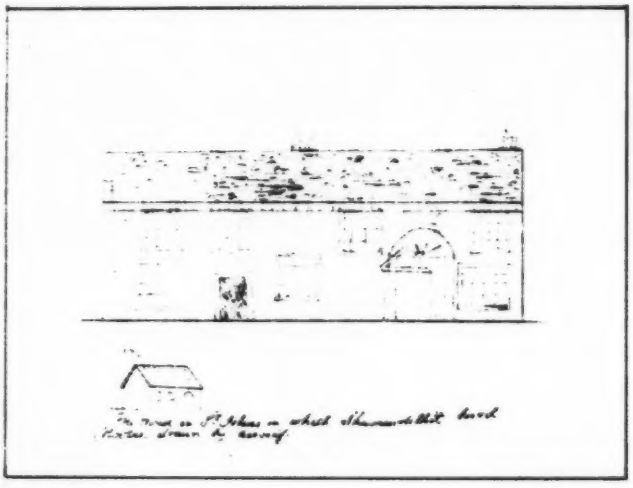
Others will be announced in due course. —Chair to be taken each evening at 8 o'clock. Tickets for the Course, 2s. 6d. each. Tickets to admit a lady and gentlemen, 5s. each. Single lectures 6d.—To be had at the Bookstore.—Members' Tickets for the Course, 1s. 3d. each, and the same price for the members of the *Mechanics Institute* and the St. John's Library and Reading Room. The latter are requested to apply to Mr. F. Rennie for their Tickets.

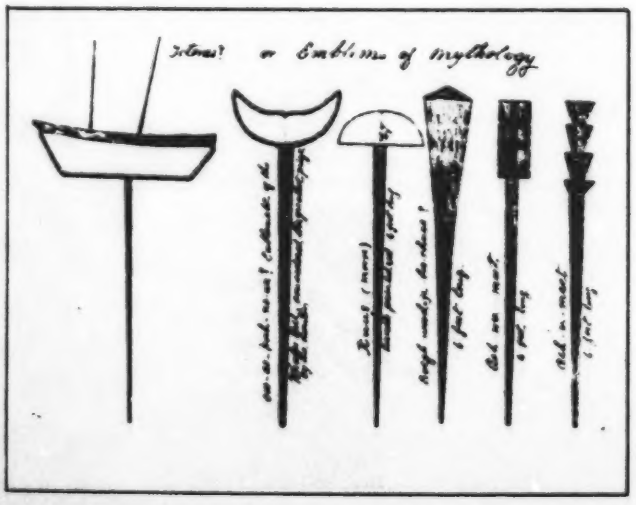
By Order,

D. W. PROWSE *Secretary*

January 15, 1861

By 1827, Newfoundland was five years away from achieving representative government, but the spirit which was to bring about this change was also inspiring Newfoundlanders to some measures of cultural reform. William Epps Cormack was the first man to walk across the island of Newfoundland, in search of the elusive Beothuk Indians. His lack of success prompted him and a few other colleagues to found the Beothuk Institute, dedicated to the study and preservation of this aboriginal population. Sadly they were too late; in 1829 Shanawdithit, last of her tribe, died of tuberculosis in St. John's. The Institute continued to search for more remnants of this race, but succeeded only in recovering its material remains, as well as those of the Naskapi, Dorset, Inuit and Maritime Archaic peoples —collections which would help form the basis for present Museum exhibits.





Two drawings done by the Beothuk woman, Shanawdithit, depicting the house in St. John's where she lived in captivity; and unexplained symbols which some people have interpreted as having mythological or ritual significance. These drawings were undertaken at the request of William Epps Cormack.

The founding of the Mechanics' Institute in 1827 was also a measure of the colony's increasing self-awareness. Radical British labour movements of the early 19th century had resulted in the establishment of a local trade club, one of 700 such groups founded across the Empire. A product of the age of reform, the Mechanics' Institute provided opportunities for education and self-improvement for the working class. Reading Rooms, libraries, lectures and publications offered public education where most often none had previously existed, thereby upgrading the technical qualifications of the Institute's membership. The Mechanics' Institute in St. John's was soon joined by a number of similar organizations including the Agricultural Society (1842) and the Young Men's Institute (1858). All of these agencies were busy collecting examples of Newfoundland's natural resources with a keen eye towards internal industrial development. In 1849 a Museum Committee combined the efforts of the various members. The success of this committee is evident in the prizes awarded to the Newfoundland display at the New York Industrial Exhibition in1855. The Committee's exhibit won three separate medals, making it the most successful entry from British North America.

"Two medals were awarded for articles forwarded by the local committee — one to the Chairman of the local committee for preserved salmon, by Mssrs. Bulley, Mitchell and Company, and grain furnished by the Agriculture Society, and the other for a very ingenious model of a sealing vessel in the ice, constructed by William Knight. The third medal was for a model of a ship's hull exhibited by William Kearney, a native builder. The Committee had a particular pleasure in referring to this latter award as of importance to a colony whose chief employment for her population must always be derived from maritime pursuits."

Royal Gazette
March 21, 1854

By the middle of the 19th century, St. John's exhibited a lively cultural scene. Entertainers were imported from Britain or the United States, or culled from the ranks of Newfoundland's own talented inhabitants. Miss Georgina Stirling, known to the world as Mlle. Marie Toulinquet and famed as an opera star, was only one of those to grace the concert halls of St. John's.

Amateur and professional productions abounded in St. John's cultural scene. This anonymous actor poses during a production of Cyrano de Bergerac.

Space, however, was limited to accommodate all these attractions and the clubs and societies found themselves meeting in the Court House chambers, Temperance Hall, Fisherman's Hall, and often the private homes of their members. The small museum collections of these clubs suffered from a lack of adequate storage and display space. Fire too took its toll of these treasures, as it did in many other aspects of St. John's life between 1800 and 1850. But many museum pieces did survive, thanks partly to the Colonial Government who, recognizing the value of such exhibits to further their industrial interests abroad, was persuaded to provide safe exhibition space in the newly-constructed Colonial Building.

"Our readers are aware that it (The Colonial Building) has been used by the Commissioners for the Paris Exhibition as a depository for the various articles intended for transmission, and on Thursday the collection was opened to the inspection of the public..."Practically all specimens of minerals to be found in Newfoundland were shown, skins of native animals such as fox, otter, martin, seal and even the skin of a polar bear and wolf, models of a sealing schooner, a western boat, fishing jack, and codseine skiff by Michael Kearney, famous shipbuilder: Model of a whale boat by Daniel Condon; two glass bottles of dried and smoked caplin; tins of salmon, lobster, codfish, mussels and curlew, a case of fish hooks made by Richard Neyle; cod seines, herring nets, mackeral nets, made by the boys of the Orphan Asylum School. And a veritable host of other items. All in all that exhibition was a great success, and showed visiting Newfoundlanders just exactly what this country had to offer to the world."

The History of The Colonial Building
Newfoundland Provincial Archives, 1976

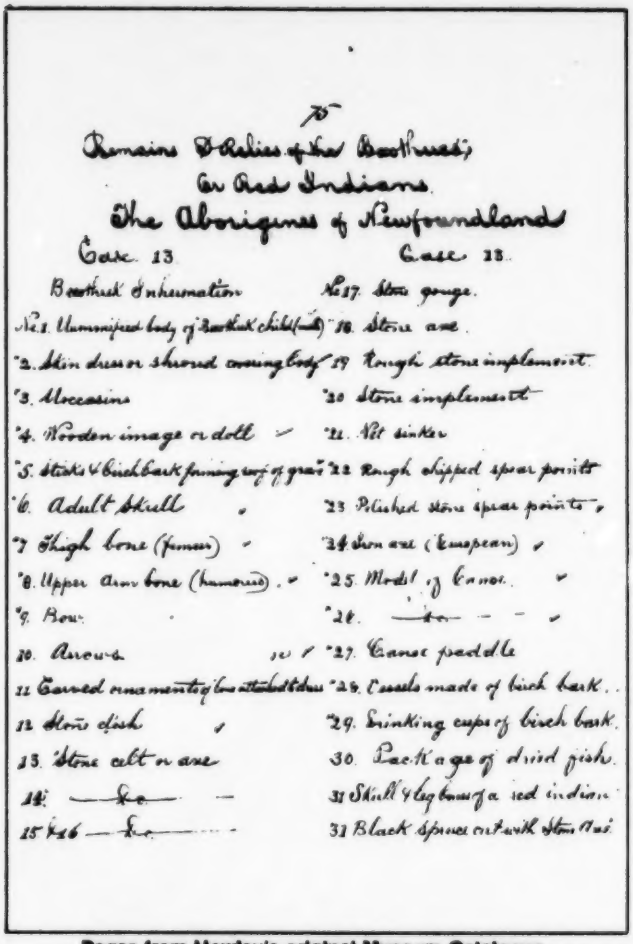
In March of 1861, the Museum Committee, Library Board and Mechanics' Institute merged to become an Athenaeum Club. Like the Mechanics' Institute, the Athenaeum Club was another product of the days of the British Empire. Its membership included many outstanding figures — Phillip Little, Robert Kent, Daniel Prowse, the Reverend Moses Harvey, Alexander Taylor and Robert Pinsent. These men were determined to provide a sophisticated cultural presence in St. John's and designed activities of the club to benefit those from all walks of life.

"The Institution shall be denominated the St. John's Athenaeum and its object shall be the cultivation and diffusion of knowledge by the establishment and maintenance of a Library and Reading room, providing for the delivery of popular lectures on Literary and Scientific subjects, organizing of classes for the instruction of young men, the collection of books of reference, of Chemical and Philosophical Apparatus, and of a Museum of Natural History, Models, Drafts, Specimens etc."

Excerpt from The St. John's Athenaeum Constitution.

Unfortunately the club was less enthusiastic about the burgeoning museum collections; they brought little revenue to the club, always an important consideration. Ignoring their constitution, the Athenaeum members sold their collection of agricultural equipment, industrial exhibits, natural history specimens and ethnological artifacts to the Colonial Government for the sum of £50. The result—a grand piano for the Athenaeum Club and the establishment of a public museum for the people of Newfoundland. The grand piano perished along with the Athenaeum's fine new building in the great fire of 1892, but the museum collection, housed in the new Post Office Building since 1886, survived and flourished under the able curatorship of James Patrick Howley, Director of the Geological Survey of Newfoundland.

If anyone was said to be the father of the Newfoundland Museum, it would be James Howley. Dedicated to the industrial development of the island, Howley was both a hardy pioneer and a model Victorian gentleman. He devoted his entire career to the study of Newfoundland's natural resources, becoming a respected authority in mapmaking, geology and natural history. Noted for his scientific publications, and his compilation of the Geological Surveys of Newfoundland from 1862 to 1909, Howley is best remembered today as the author of *The Beothuks or Red Indians, The Original Inhabitants of Newfoundland (1915).*



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Remains & Relics of the Beothuck,
Or Red Indians.
The Aborigines of Newfoundland

Case 13	Case 13
Beothuck Inhumation	No 17. Stone gouge.
No 1. Unembalmed body of Beothuck child (male)	18. Stone axe.
" 2. Skin dress or shroud covering body	19 Rough stone implement.
" 3. Moccasins	" 20 Stone implement
" 4. Wooden image or doll	" 21. Pot sinker
" 5. Sticks & Birch bark forming roof of grave	" 22 Rough chipped spear points
" 6. Adult Skull	" 23 Polished stone spear points
" 7 Thigh bone (femur)	" 24 Iron axe (European)
" 8. Upper arm bone (humerus)	" 25. Model of Canoe
" 9. Bow	" 26. —do—
10. Arrows	" 27. Canoe paddle
11 Carved ornamental bone attached thereto	" 28. Vessels made of birch bark
12 Stone dish	" 29. Drinking cups of birch bark
13. Stone celt or axe	30. Package of dried fish
14. —do—	31 Skull & leg bones of a red indian
15 & 16 —do—	31 Black Spruce cut with Stone Axe

Pages from Howley's original Museum Catalogue.

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Beothuck Remains & Relics...

Case 12

No 24. Chips or flakes of stone left from the manufacture of stone implements	No 33. Drawings by Shawnadithit
25 Fragments of Bow & Arrows &c &c of the Beothuck Indians.	34
26. Nodules of Iron Pyrites used as fire-stones by the Beothucs.	35.
27.	36 French clay pipe found at the foot hills of Droglodes Ridge North side of South
28. Personal Ornaments of the Beothuks	River Conception Bay. Presented
29	by James Mann Brigus.
30. Red-Ochre used for decorating	37.
Skin persons &c &c by the Beothucs	38. Taken from a Red Indian
31. Bow & arrow used by the Beothucs	Wigwam at Lake Bathurst
32. Hoop and stick used for exercising	at the Capture of a Red Indian
Mount upon by the Beothucks.	Woman on the 5th of March 1819.
33. Drawings of Personal ornaments	afterwards named Mary March
by Edith Blake. March 1886	By John Peyton. J. P.

It is primarily through Howley's efforts that the museum survived into the 20th century. Not only did he add to the Museum's collection a huge amount of material from his field expeditions, but he constantly lobbied the Colonial Government for improved facilities, better maintenance, and more generous operating support. He opened the Newfoundland Museum to the public in 1887, saw it through the fire of 1892 and the bank crash of 1894, and installed it in the present building in 1907. The construction of the present museum building was in fact the result of Howley's avid collecting and soliciting of support and donations. By 1900 the Museum collections had grown far beyond the space allowed in the Post Office. Howley convinced Sir Robert Bond, then Prime Minister of Newfoundland and an avid collector himself, to build a new museum on the site of the destroyed Athenaeum Club. In 1904 work commenced under the direction of Anton and Webb, an English architectural firm who completed the new museum in 1907 at a cost of $30,000.

From its inception, the building was never adequate as a museum facility. Howley's letters and those of his successor, J. F. Shortis, a well-known historian, are testimony to their struggles with leaking skylights, poor heating, and inadequate funding.

March 26, 1914.

James Harris Esq.,
Secretary of Board of Works.

Dear Sir,

One of the steam pipes connecting one of the radiators in upper room of Museum is defective, and has damaged the wall considerably. The plastering is falling down and needs immediate attention to avoid more serious damages.

As soon as the weather conditions will allow, the roof needs attention, as after the last rain storm we had several very bad leaks, and five or six panes of glass in the roof are broken.

Would also, like to call your attention once again to the lavatory which is not in working condition, in fact, has not been satisfactory since it was put in, though attended to several times.

I might add that in connection with the leaks in the roof that some of our valuable specimens are getting spoiled and would ask you to kindly give your attention at your earliest convenience to this matter.

(signed) *Wm. Duggan,*
Caretaker.

One of many letters written between 1900 and 1933 requesting attention to the deplorable Museum conditions.

Howley died in 1918 and was spared what would have been for him an acutely painful moment — the dissolution of the Museum in 1934 by the Commission of Government. The world-wide depression of 1929 was the doom of the Museum as a public institution. Funds were too scarce to lavish on what seemed to the Commission an unnecessary luxury. Without electricity or heat, with snow and rain falling through the smashed skylights onto rapidly decaying artifacts, there appeared little hope that anything would be saved. One attempt at revival by the Carnegie Foundation of New York failed because the Commissioner for Natural Resources of Newfoundland would not allow for a permanent museum curator to administer the substantial Carnegie grant to repair and refurnish the Museum. The Museum closed.

Efforts were made by the Historical Society and Memorial College to make some record of over one hundred years of collecting in Newfoundland before the collections were dispersed. Their catalogues are poignant reminders of the loss Newfoundlanders suffered when their past was abandoned. The various depots selected for storing the collection — the Smoke House at the cold storage building at Long Bridge, the Fisheries Research Building at Bay Bulls, the Department of Geology at Memorial College and the Newfoundland Historical Society — none were equipped to maintain the fragile museum artifacts and specimens. Of all the agencies entrusted with the interim housing of the collection, only the Historical Society managed to return their treasures when the time finally arrived to restore the museum.

That time was 1947, when Leo F. English unofficially assumed the position of Curator, to supervise the restoration of the Newfoundland Museum. The daily newspapers of that period recounted the progress of the restoration and speculated upon the Museum's opening. That speculation would continue for the next 10 years. Confederation in 1949 made the need for a provincial institution to preserve the province's rich heritage, ever more urgent. One of the first acts of the Smallwood Government was to appoint a Board of Trustees to oversee the re-establishment of the Museum. But it takes time to build a museum, and it was January 21, 1957 before the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Leonard Outerbridge, would declare the Museum officially open.

All Things Come To Those Who Wait
NEWFOUNDLANDERS ARE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT A RESTORATION OF THAT FAMOUS INSTITUTION: THE MUSEUM — HAS BEEN EFFECTED.
THE BIG 6 has nothing to offer the MUSEUM of an antiquated nature. It is showing the most modern in MEN'S and WOMEN'S READY-TO-WEAR.
But with thousands of other citizens interested in the preservation of our historic relics, it feels that those who made it possible are entitled to a large measure of public gratitude.
According to Chambers museums come up from the mists of antiquity.
Originally a name given by the ancients to a temple of the Muses. The first Museum was the celebrated Alexandrian Museum. After the revival of learning in Europe the term Museum was sometimes applied to the apartment in which any kind of philosophical apparatus was kept and used; but it has long been devoted to collections of the monuments of antiquity of interest to the scholar. The British and Oxford Museums are famous. The Museum of the Vatican in Rome contains immense treasures in sculptures and paintings, books and manuscripts. Another learned authority says: Any place where curiosities, freaks, monstrosities are exhibited.
TOWNE HALL SUITS
FOR MEN
(Canada's Leader)
are at THE BIG 6
Regular Price 69.50
BUT UNTIL FEBRUARY 10th
$59.50
LADIES' DRESSES
the modern styles.
Regular 10.00 and 15.00
GOING AT
4.98
J. M. DEVINE The Big 6

Advertisement in Evening Telegram, January 21, 1957.

When the Newfoundland Museum did open, it opened as a provincial museum, assured of continuing government support by legislation enacted in 1955 — "An Act respecting the Preservation of Historic Objects". This foundation act was to be amended many times over the years, most recently in 1979. It provided, for the first time, a clear mandate for the Newfoundland Museum to function as the provincial agency responsible for the preservation and display of the material heritage and natural history of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was unfortunate that after such a long period of neglect, the collections, now so well protected under this new legislation, were found to be in a deplorable condition. Leo English and his very able assistant, Nimshaw Crewe, devoted endless time and energy to the slow re-building of the Museum's shattered collections. Crewe presented his own vast collection of Newfoundlandia to the Museum, and along with Premier Joseph Smallwood, was tireless in his pursuit of the vanishing artifacts of the past.

400 1959 *Historic Objects, Sites and Records Act* No. 76

PART II — HISTORIC OBJECTS

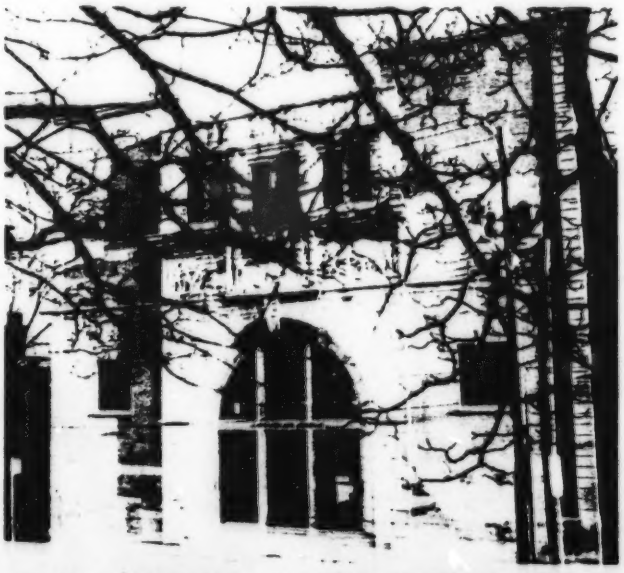
Museum established.

16.—(1) There is hereby established a museum called the Newfoundland Museum which shall serve as a repository for relics, artifacts, models, paintings and other devices, materials, articles and things which are of historical value and importance to or connected with the archaeology, ethnology and social, economic and cultural development of Newfoundland.

The opening of the Museum ushered in a new era in the preservation of Newfoundland's heritage. In 1960 the Museum and Archives were grouped together under Allen Fraser and in 1968, the Archives, Museum, Historic Sites and Exhibit Planning sections became the Historic Resources Division, tacit acknowledgement by the provincial government of the importance of the past — Newfoundland's heritage was a resource for the future. New exhibits and facilities opened quickly — the Naval and Military Museum under David Webber in 1963, the Maritime Gallery at the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre in 1967 and the Gander Aviation Exhibit in that same year; and finally the southern Newfoundland Seamen's Museum at Grand Bank in 1971. During the Museum's expansion, development of Historic Sites became increasingly important. In 1966 an Historic Markers programme began. In 1967 Quidi Vidi Battery was restored and presented to the province by the 56th Field Squadron of the Royal Canadian Engineers. Heart's Content Cable Station opened in 1974, the Commissariat House in St. John's opened in 1977 and the Bonavista Lighthouse in 1978. These historic sites, apart from being accurate restorations in themselves, display a wide range of artifacts selected from the Museum collections.

The Museum expanded rapidly throughout the province, and in fact throughout the rest of Canada. The schooner "Norma and Gladys" was restored, becoming Canada's only floating Museum. The ship's hold containing exhibits which illustrated Canada's stand on the 200 mile limit and the importance of Newfoundland's fisheries, toured Europe, United States and Canada's Maritime provinces. The Newfoundland Museum was beginning to fulfill Howley's hope that it would not be simply a dusty attic, but an institution dedicated to "elevating the thoughts of youth....towards the building of a true and permanent civilization". Many of these activities were made possible by the federal government which, under their new museum programme of 1972, provided funds to provincial museums to help them serve their public more effectively.

But the Museum still laboured under old constraints, many caused by its inadequate building. Martin L. Bowe, Director of Historic Resources, worked with the National Museums in Ottawa to seek new solutions to some of the old problems. In 1976, the Museum building on Duckworth Street closed its doors for massive renovations. The leaking skylights, bane of James Howley's existence, were finally covered, the heating and lighting improved, and a new mezzanine floor added to provide the type of facility Howley had envisioned 70 years before. While the carpenters and architects laboured under the supervision of Sir Christopher Barlow, museum staff planned new exhibits. No longer would stag antlers hang precariously over Victorian china, nor over-stuffed cases of unrelated artifacts crowd the visitors. The Museum staff sought to achieve Howley's dream, to make the Museum an educational institution and to present to the people of Newfoundland an exciting and accurate view of their long past.



The Newfoundland Museum on Duckworth Street in St. John's.

The newly-renovated Museum opened in August 1979, its fourth official opening in 102 years. As the province has grown and changed so has the Museum, to reflect the past and the present of Newfoundland and Labrador. For over a century the Museum has been a public institution belonging to the people of the province. In his time, Howley remarked that the people of the outports delighted in a visit to the Museum on their infrequent trips to town, often bringing with them an unusual species of fish, bird or insect as a donation. As the Newfoundland Museum enters its second century of service to the people of Newfoundland, it is to be hoped that it will suffer fewer reverses, disappointments and sheer bad luck than it did in its first 100 years of life.

Elizabeth B. Callaghan

NEWFOUNDLAND MUSEUM, HISTORIC RESOURCES DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM,
GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR